LEAVE IT TO ME!

FWISH

I'M GONNA GIVE IT MY BEST!

DON'T WORRY. YOU HAVE A VERY LOVELY SMILE!

NOW, SHOW THE WORLD WHAT YOUR NEW AVATAR IS CAPABLE OF!

BE SURE TO ENGRAVE THOSE WORDS INTO YOUR HEART!

YES, BOSS!

LISTEN HERE, IKO! WHEN THE VIEWERS CATCH A GLIMPSE...

...OF YOUR EMOTIONS, THAT'S THE MOMENT YOU EXPLODE IN POPULARITY AS A VTUBER!

Tune In to the Midnight Heart
Finding the girl behind the voice.

VER2.0...?

IS THIS A DIFFERENCE?

I DON'T SEE ANY DIFFERENCE.

IT'S DIFFERENT?

だぐ

DRIP

SORRY, STILL LOOKS THE SAME.

だぐ

DRIP

...?

NO ENTRY

IT'S THE SAME AVATAR, LMAO

だぐ

IS IT EVEN TRACKING YOUR FACE?

DID YOU CHECK YOUR SETTINGS?

WHA...?

だぐ

DRIP

IS IT REALLY UPDATED?

だぐ

DRIP

THIS IS A NEW AVATAR?

I JUST CAN'T TELL...

HER FACE...

ISN'T THIS THE SAME AVATAR?

...IS SOMEHOW EVEN STIFFER THAN USUAL!

TRY AND SMILE!

NAH, IT'S TOTALLY A NEW ONE IS

HMM...

HOW CAN YOU CALL THIS A "NEW AND IMPROVED" VERSION?

I WAS THINKING THAT MAYBE HER AVATAR GOT CUTER...

WAS SHE JUST CLICK-BAITING?

IKON SUMERAGI

SHARE

SAVE

325 WATCHING

SO, IT'S NOT THAT SHE CAN'T SHOW EMOTIONS.

SHE JUST CAN'T DO IT IN FRONT OF OTHER PEOPLE.

SHE WAS ABLE TO SMILE BEFORE (EVEN IF I DID HAVE TO FORCE IT OUT OF HER).

DRIP

DRIP

DRIP

DRIP

DRIP

STILL, I DIDN'T THINK SHE'D JUST FREEZE UP LIKE THIS.

SHE'S NEVER EXPRESSED HER EMOTIONS THROUGH HER AVATAR BEFORE, AFTER ALL.

TAP TAP

TAP

IS IT BECAUSE OF A BAD EXPERIENCE IN THE PAST?

I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO ENACT MY PLAN.

TMP TMP TMP

TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
SMILE!!

FLAP
UGH... I CAN'T!
IT FEELS LIKE EVERYONE IS STARING AT ME UP CLOSE...
AND I JUST CAN'T MOVE A MUSCLE ON MY FACE!
FLAP

FLIP
IT'S KIND OF A DRASTIC MEASURE, THOUGH.
FLIP
THEN MAYBE IT'S TIME FOR MY LAST RESORT.

FLIP
WHAT WILL YOU DO? DO YOU WANT MY HELP?

FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
HELP ME!
THUD
THUD
YOU GOT IT!
FWP

WHA ...?!

BEEP

LET'S PAUSE THE STREAM...

Phew...

WAIT... WHAT?!

SST

?

WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING, BUCKY?!

YOU CAN'T JUST PAUSE A LIVE STREAM LIKE THAT! EVERYONE WAS WATCHING, Y'KNOW!

YOUR VIEWER COUNT WAS DROPPING ANYWAY.

YOU SWEATED BUCKETS BECAUSE YOU WERE SO NERVOUS.

YOU SHOULD TAKE SOME CLOTHES OFF.

JUST CALM DOWN...

...AND TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT YOURSELF.

YOU'RE AN ULTRA PERVERT.

AND I COULDN'T CARE LESS WHAT YOU CALL ME.

JUST TAKE SOME CLOTHES OFF. YOU'LL CATCH A COLD.

SWSH

SWSH

SWSH

YOU KNOW...

HEH

Talk-about a major letdown.

YOU SPOKE WITH SUCH CONFIDENCE BEFORE THE STREAM! WAS THAT NOTHING MORE THAN HOT AIR?

I'M FRANKLY DISAPPOINTED IN YOU, IKO KIRINO.

I JUST DIDN'T EXPECT...

THAT I'D BE SO NERVOUS...

-POUT

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SUCH A JERK ABOUT THIS.

GUESS THAT MEANS YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS ABOUT YOUR DREAM.

Hee hee hee hee!

EVEN SO, YOU SHOULD STILL BE ABLE TO SMILE, RIGHT?

I'M... SERIOUS ABOUT THIS, Y'KNOW.

YOU SURE LIKE BEING A KNOW-IT-ALL, DON'T YOU, BUCKY?

YOU'RE JUST SOME KID FOOLING AROUND ONLINE.

NOPE, YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS AT ALL.

MM

I AM SERIOUS, YOU INSUF-FERABLE PRICK!

CLATTER

I AM DOING MY DARNED-EST, YOU KNOW!

YOU WERE ANYTHING BUT QUIET, THOUGH.

I'VE STAYED QUIET AND PUT UP WITH YOUR CRAP ALL THIS TIME, BUT NO MORE!

YOU HATE STREAMING, DON'T YOU?

WHY DON'T YOU GIVE IT UP, THEN?

I am human!

I HAVE EMOTIONS, TOO, SINCE I'M HUMAN AND ALL!

B-BUT...

...I JUST CAN'T DO THIS! I'M TOO SCARED!

SAD

NO, I LOVE STREAM-ING...

I DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP...

DO YOU REALLY LOVE STREAMING THAT MUCH?

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT IT?

HUH? WELL, Y'KNOW...

I LIKE THAT I CAN INTERACT WITH HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE...

BEAAAM

IKO-CHAN!!!

KA-CHAK

ALSO...

YOUR WHOLE EXCHANGE WAS STREAMED ONLINE!

YOU DIDN'T TURN OFF YOUR AUDIO FOR THE STREAM!

WHOA?! WHAT'S WRONG?

EVERY-THING!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, IKO?!

AGHHH

I-I-I-I-I-IT'S ALL OVER FOR ME...

PALE

NO WAY... I'M TOTALLY GETTING A WAVE OF COMMENTS I DON'T WANNA READ...

ANYWAY, TAKE A LOOK AT THE STREAM!

FORGET A WAVE!

IT'S MORE LIKE A TSUNA-MI!

SHE ACTUALLY RAISED HER VOICE!!

2041 WATCHING

HUH? HOW'D THIS HAPPEN? WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

SO THE MALE VOICE WAS YAMA-BUKI'S!

WHY DON'T YOU EXPLAIN WHAT HAP-PENED?

IKO...

BEFORE THE STREAM BEGAN...

I SAID THAT A VTUBER EXPLODES IN POPULARITY THE MOMENT THEIR EMOTIONS ARE SHOWN...

...BUT THAT'S NOT ENTIRELY CORRECT.

TO BE MORE PRECISE...

...IT'S WHEN YOU ACCIDENTALLY REVEAL YOUR TRUE SELF THAT YOU BECOME POPULAR.

WHY DON'T YOU END THE STREAM ON A GOOD NOTE?

YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR VIEWERS WANT TO HEAR NOW, DON'T YOU?

HUFF

Ahem!

Aah!

Aah!

PHEW

TEE HEE HEE...

FORGET-ABOUT-IT BEAM!

FSSSH

I-I'LL END THE STREAM FOR NOW!

POP

GAP MOE RULES!

SO CUTE !!

WHEW

THEY'RE SUCH A HANDFUL...

I SWEAR...

WHY CAN'T SHE JUST TALK TO ME ON THE PHONE?

IT'S THE NOTIFI-CATION FOR IKO'S EXCLUSIVE STREAM.

DING DING

IS IT A GOOD TIME TO TALK TO YOU?

HEY, BUCKY.

POP

...AND SINCE I HAVE A NEW AVATAR NOW, I FIGURED I MIGHT AS WELL USE IT TO SAY MY THANKS.

I DIDN'T GET TO THANK YOU EARLIER...

SURE. I'M USING THE BATHROOM RIGHT NOW, AFTER ALL.

THAT'S A GOOD TIME FOR YOU?

ALL I REALLY DID WAS INSULTING YOU.

THANK ME?

OH?

WHAT-EVER DO YOU MEAN?

IT WAS ALL PART OF YOUR PLAN, WASN'T IT?

YOU "FORGOT" TO TURN OFF THE STREAM AND MADE ME MAD ON PURPOSE.

...BUT I'LL KEEP TRYING MY BEST TO EXPRESS MYSELF.

I HAVEN'T GOTTEN OVER MY FEAR YET...

HUH?

IT'S JUST NO MATCH FOR YOU.

...

YOUR NEW AVATAR IS PRETTY GOOD AND ALL...

...BUT IT'S JUST NO MATCH FOR A GENUINE SMILE FROM YOU.

STIFF

HELLO?

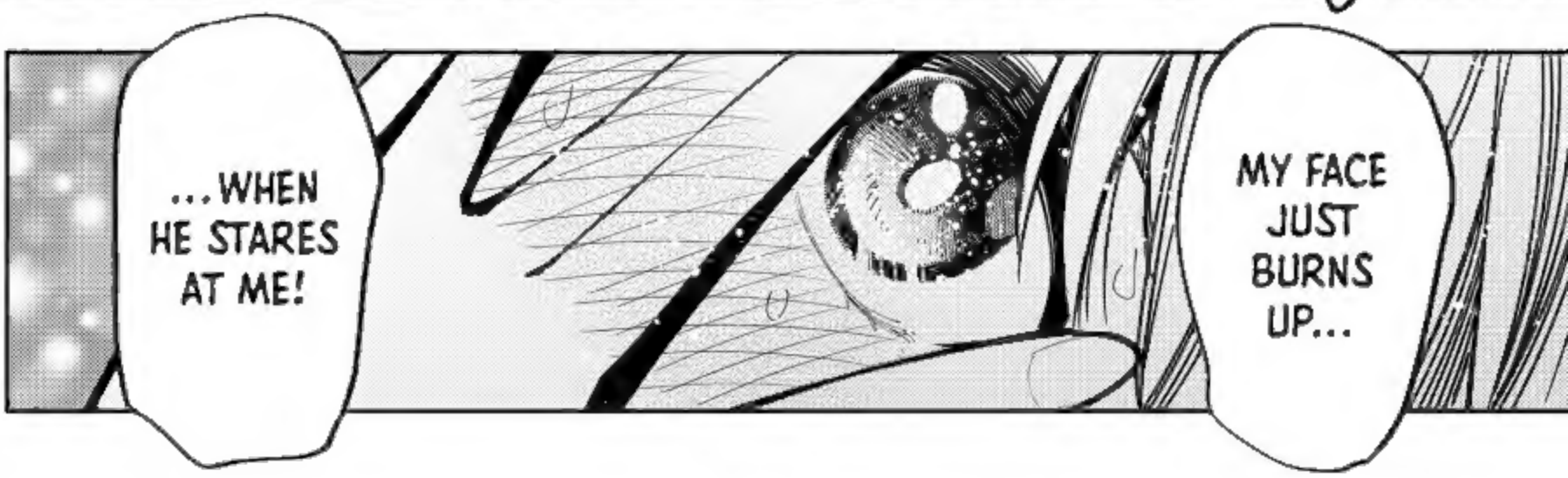
TALK TO ME!

HEY! YOU'RE ALL POKER-FACED AGAIN!

WAS ALL MY EFFORT TODAY FOR NOTHING?!

OH NO... IF I HIDE MY FACE...

...THE PROGRAM WILL STOP TRACKING IT...



CHAPTER 8: I CAN'T SMILE IN FRONT OF YOU!